



May 3, 2018

The Honorable Garnet Coleman

Chairman

House County Affairs Committee

Re: **Emergency Response during statewide disasters**

Mr. Coleman & Committee members,

The two most predominant emergencies in Texas are flooding and wild fires. The Texas Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA) represents over 1,100 Fire Chiefs who are responsible for over 40,000 Firefighters. The majority of Texas Fire Departments are “All-Hazard Response” agencies, tasked with responding to a variety of life safety emergencies with a common vision of ***“Doing the most good, for the greatest number of people as quickly and safely as possible”***. While lives have been lost during recent catastrophic events, thousands more have been saved by Firefighters.

There is a need for a single State agency that manages and coordinates all Fire & Rescue response in the State of Texas. Currently, there are multiple different state response teams comprised of firefighters from Texas Fire Departments that are activated during an emergency. TEEX manages both Texas Task Force 1. The Texas A & M Texas Forest Service coordinates the Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid system and the Incident Management Teams. DSHS operates the Emergency Medical Task Forces.

Each team is coordinated through separate Memorandums of Understandings and funded through reimbursements from TDEM. While these programs are working because of strong leadership at each agency, there are many challenges that remain in regards to coordination, training and funding. TDEM has been working with all of the response agencies to achieve a more streamlined approach with great success but there remains the fact that there are multiple State agencies managing these teams. TFCA is willing to assist the State in any way necessary to identify how this would work best to ultimately ensure the highest degree of efficiency and safety for all Texans.

Respectfully,

Mike Wisko

TFCA Legislative Director